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PASTORAL LETTER

FROM THE SYNOD OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA,
IN CONNEXION WITH THE
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

IN NAME,

AND BY APPOINTMENT OF THE SYNOD,

AT KINGSTON,

DIET VI. SESSION VI. YEAR 1836.

WILLIAM RINTOUL,

MODERATOR.

PRINTED AT THE CHRISTIAN EXAMINER OFFICE.

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FROM THE

SYNOD OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA,

IN CONNEXION WITH THE

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

Introductory Notice.

The authority of the Synod, under which the Moderator has written this letter, warrants him to call, as he now does, on his honoured Brethren in the Ministry, as well as on the Missionaries of the Synod, to read the same to their several congregations, on the first or second Sabbath after it shall have come into their hands. Mr. W. D. Miller, Niagara, Publisher of the Christian Examiner is instructed to transmit a few copies to every session or congregation under the jurisdiction of the Synod.

WM. RINTOUL, Moderator.

Saundersville, 27th May, 1837.

The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in communion with the Church of Scotland;—To the members of that Church, and all who attend on the ministry of the word by her Pastors and Missionaries, wish peace and salvation from God the Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

DEAREY BELOVED,—

Bearing in mind that the high and proper objects for which we, the Ministers and Elders assemble in Synod, are the edification, peace, and enlargement of the Church; and, that these objects, through the divine blessing, may be promoted by a word of counsel and admonition from us, as well as by our deliberations; we the rather address you all, in this common epistle; and we do so, with the greater liberty, because of the esteem and confidence which you entertain towards us. Were we addressing ourselves only to those of you who make a full profession of Christian discipleship, by attending at the sacramental table, as well as the other institutions of the Saviour, charity itself would forbid us from speaking to them, as though they were all in truth, belie-

vers, and saints; knowing, as we do, that neither in any past age, nor in the present, amongst ourselves, or in any other Christian community, has it been, or is it so, that "all are Israel which are of Israel." But, seeing that we are expressly addressing ourselves to many who, in a certain respect, are of us, while yet they make only a partial or equivocal profession of their connexion with the Saviour—those we mean who have been baptized in infancy, and now, excepting in so far as regards their attendings on the preaching of the word, and contributing, it may be, to uphold it, give no other distinctive evidence of being Christians—we cannot but speak to them according to the character which they sustain.

We know, indeed, that such of you are often expostulated with, and reproved, in the ordinary ministrations of the word, for your inconsistency: and yet, "dearly beloved and longed for," as we may call you, we would, even now also, plainly and affectionately admonish you, that, if you would not be the veriest fools for time and eternity, you must be not almost, but altogether Christians. You must realize your baptism, by putting away all your sins, and cordially embracing Jesus as he is tendered to you in the Gospel. So shall you become one with him; and salvation, in all the boundless extent of its present and reversionary blessings shall be yours. You will then love Christ supremely, and devote yourselves to his service; you will glory in his death, delight to commemorate it, and number yourselves with those who are waiting for his coming.

And to all into whose hands this letter comes, who, with or without a profession of being the followers of Christ, have never seen the glory of his character and salvation; nor surrender themselves to him as his willing and obedient people, but continue worldly and ungodly—it may be even vicious, licentious, and intemperate—we would say deceive not yourselves concerning your character and condition. You are of "the congregation of the dead," and nothing but an entire renovation of heart and life can save you from having your portion with the lost in the regions of outer darkness.

It is good for us Brethren, as well as for you, frequently to remember, that our office as rulers in the Church of God, is directly conversant with your spiritual and immortal interests. The Ministry is the very principal institution of that Kingdom which God has established in our world for the salvation of lost men, and the manifestation of his own glory. It is charged with the administration of the laws and privileges of that Kingdom; it interprets his oracles, and fetches from these instructions to men according to their varied circumstances and characters. It is in short, a grand instrument of the Holy Spirit, by which he brings men into union with the Son of God, and a fellowship with each other, and by which also, he purposes them for a holier and more exalted condition in his heavenly kingdom. Ministers themselves may well feel their entire unworthiness of their office.—A deep sense of this indeed, will always characterize those who are best accomplished for it. They may yet properly call on their hearers, as we would now do on you, to honour the ministry, to expect much from it, to attend diligently on it, to concur in the gracious designs of God respecting it, and to strive earnestly in prayer, for the Holy Spirit to put forth his saving power by it. You

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must entertain honourable thoughts of the ministry if you duly recognise its Divine authority, and its high ends—the presenting men perfect in Christ Jesus—the displaying to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. And you must diligently attend on it, and earnestly implore God to bless it, if you would prove its efficiency to your own salvation, and that of others: for, his sovereignty and grace must be acknowledged and honoured in all the means which he employs in his spiritual kingdom. Yea brethren, we beseech you all, by your own supreme interests in that kingdom, and by all that should constrain you to seek its establishment in this land, to pray for us, who minister the word that it may have free course and be glorified. Plead with him in our behalf, and for the sake of his Great Name, in your closets, and families, and social meetings; and then, we may be well assured, that he will look down from heaven, and behold, and visit us as a church, and cause his face to shine upon us.

We are not here formally treating of your duty towards the ministry, and so there are many views of it which we are not at present setting before you; yet, there is one which, both on account of its own importance, and of its being seldom exhibited in our ordinary ministrations, we would be bold in this epistle to press upon you—that, we mean, which respects your providing for the maintenance of the Ministry. We may say, that it would not in all respects be self-denial for Ministers to betake themselves to secular employments for their support: some of these have their own allurements, and most of them in this land, their abundant profits. It is on the score of self-denial, that they should stand aloof from such employments. The public and private work of the ministry do properly claim the whole time of those who are called to it: and hence, it is the very first duty of a people, to see that so far as their influence and ability extend, their ministers shall have no temptation to alienate their time to any inferior concerns. If, unhappily, Ministers must engage in secular employments for a temporal provision for themselves and their families, the abstraction of even a large portion of time is not the greatest injury which their spiritual work sustains. They are too apt to contract a worldly and covetous spirit, and then at best the spiritual life can only struggle for an existence within them, and in such a case, it may not be expected, that they are to be extensively useful in communicating that life to others. Christians then, who allow their Ministers to struggle with poverty, or to labour in worldly callings to keep poverty at a distance, are treacherous, alike to their own eternal interests and to the cause, as well as the authority of their Master.

All Princes and Powers on earth owe a homage to Him by whom they reign, and when, happily, they contribute their resources to the support and extension of the Saviour's kingdom, in so far as they may be available to these ends, they are, in the very way of promoting the temporal and eternal welfare of their subjects. But, if rulers fail to appreciate the truth and to do it due homage, who does not see, that the followers of Christ are themselves, on this account, bound to do more for its support?

But beloved brethren, we need scarcely remind you, that the pastoral office is conversant about more than preaching the word. There is a visible or-

ganization of Christ's kingdom on earth, called the Church, which we, your pastors and elders, are called to maintain. To us, conjunctly, is entrusted the administration of the laws which respect admission into the Church, the conduct of its members as such, and the administration of the sacraments. And we now call on you to honour and support us, in the maintenance of the discipline of the Church.

Ah, we painfully feel that the discipline of the Church is not by many of us at least so zealously and vigorously maintained, as to give occasion for us to deprecate your displeasure for even apparent severity. The many infirmities that beset us, to say nothing of our liability to error, from a wish to judge charitably of those who are the subjects of discipline, do rather, we fear, expose us to the charge of lenity. Yet, there are too many members of the church, who are impatient of admonition, and reproof, however tenderly applied; and who seem to think, that their religious profession should subject them to no spiritual controul. But we would have such to consider, that if it is the occasional duty of all the followers of Christ to counsel and reprove each other, it is the proper duty of the rulers of the Church to do so, to those whose conduct openly contradicts the profession they have made of being a peculiar people 'redeemed from all iniquity.' And that if it is with the rulers of the church, to declare the terms of admission into it, and to judge of the qualification of candidates for its privileges, so, they are also authorized, even to cast out of its communion, those who spurn at admonition, and reproof, or continue in their evil courses after having been affectionately warned to forsake them.

This letter may come into the hands or be read in the hearing of some, who have been admitted into the Church by baptism in infancy, trained up to an attendance on its ordinances, and it may be even formally numbered with his people at the sacramental table; and who yet, for all this, have drawn back from us and well nigh abdicated all connexion with Christ and with his cause. Oh, that a word of expostulation and reproof might be effectual to the reclaiming of such to the way of peace and safety! Can such say that their own experience of the ways of religion and of irreligion justifies them for casting off the fear of God, and neglecting the Gospel and its ordinances?—that they have arrived at a well grounded assurance, that the word of God with its testimonies to the character of God, its promises of a present and everlasting salvation, and its threats of a second death to all who disobey it, is a cunningly devised fable? Will they pretend, that the world for which they are now living gives and promises them a satisfying and durable peace? Ah, we know that all backsliders are self-condemned, and as we would have them escape the condemnation of Him who is greater than conscience and knoweth all things, we beseech them, to return to that God whom they have forsaken. Let them bewail and confess their folly before him, embrace the overtures of reconciliation which he still holds out, and cast in their lot for time and eternity with his people.

There are not a few, whom we are formally addressing in this letter, who, alas, cannot ordinarily attend on the ordinances of the Church, from the want of the stated administration of these amongst them. Some of you, we know,

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feel keenly your present spiritual destitution, and even weep, when you remember the privileges which you enjoyed in the land of your fathers, when you went with the multitude to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise. But, take it not as a mockery of your sorrow, that we bid you hope for better days. The soil which many of you are now clearing, and the climate to which you have removed, teem with promises of plenty to you, and to your children. And an enlightened acquaintance with the spiritual economy of God may warrant the belief, that ere long the most forbidding moral desert shall flourish and blossom like the rose! The places in these Provinces which are most favoured as to spiritual privileges—alas, at best small and imperfect clearings, in surrounding wastes, were yet only a few years ago, without ministers and churches; and, now, through the Divine blessing, on the exertions of the settlers themselves, assisted, as in many cases they have been by the government, or the church at home, they are, what they are. Do not ye then despair of yet enjoying a stated ministration of the word and ordinances of the Gospel. Above all things, guard against becoming indifferent about them.

Ah, many on their first coming to this country, thought that all the temporal comforts which it afforded or promised them were nothing, because of the want of schools and churches for their children and themselves which they encountered: and yet of these, not a few have been found willing to forego the education of their children for the profits of their labour; while they have sunk into an apathy about divine things through their eager pursuit of the world, and destitution of religious principles; so that, after the lapse of a few years, when the Gospel has come to their doors through the labours of Missionaries, or Ministers, their relish, or concern for it, have altogether vanished. We would have those of you then, who are sensible of your spiritual privations to exert yourselves to the utmost, to obtain the ministrations of the Gospel. Invite the occasional service of the Ministers who are nearest to you. Endeavour to associate yourselves in your several neighbourhoods for procuring the labours of a Missionary or stated Pastor. And where these cannot be obtained, you may do well, to meet together on the Lord's day, in a school house, or private dwelling, for prayer, and praise, and other spiritual exercises. For God will meet with you, and bless you, if you do indeed seek to know and honour him; and you will thus be in the way of keeping alive religion in your families and neighbourhoods, and of preparing also for a more abundant and effective administration of its ordinances. The infant settlements of this day, should know, that some congregations which have now acquired a measure of vigour and stability, had their origin in little companies that for a time, went Sabbath after Sabbath, from one log house to another, to sing and pray, and read the Bible with the exposition of its truths, by some of the worthies of our native land. If there be among you Elders, honour their office by inviting them to preside in your devotional meetings; and, if there be not, we recommend you to lay your case before the Presbytery, within whose bounds you reside, and seek their direction and assistance. They may see fit, to organize you into congregations, and ordain Elders amongst you. They may direct

Missionaries to visit you, or send from time to time, a Minister to dispense amongst you, Divine ordinances.

But, blessed be God, all access to him, and communion with him are not forbidden his people even though they may be dispersed in the lonely wilderness, and far from his sanctuaries. For Jehovah who is great in Zion has his dwelling "with him, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And he hears the prayer poured out to him in secret, and speaks peace to his people through his word: and, when they wait humbly on Him with their families, he causes the voice of rejoicing and salvation to be heard in their tabernacles! And here, BRETHREN, permit us to say in reference to FAMILY WORSHIP, that if the stated and serious observance of it is necessary to the healthy existence of family religion, even when all the public ordinances of the Church are enjoyed, then, the want of those ordinances only enhances the necessity for its observance; by every one at least, who would adopt the resolution of Joshua: "as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Attendance on the public worship of God, to which we have been adverting, is but one branch of another more comprehensive duty, to which also we would now call your attention—that of HONOURING THE LORD'S DAY. And, in respect of this great duty, which draws its sanctions alike from the law of the Ten Commandments, and the gospel economy, we desire to leave a formal testimony with all whom we are now addressing, whether dwellers in the woods, or in villages and towns.

Be assured then, that a conscientious regard to the Sabbath as a day for spiritual exercises is essential to the existence and perpetuity of the Divine life in the soul. The glorious character and works of God, especially as they are manifested in the plan of redemption, must have a set time for being studied. The fear and love, adoration and praise which are supremely due unto him, must have a time for being cultivated and expressed. The glory and immortality which the gospel offers to our faith and hopes, to be seen by us in their own transcendent importance and excellence, must be contemplated at a time, when our minds are withdrawn from the cares and pursuits of earth. And such a time, a time too appointed by God is our WEEKLY SABBATH. See then, BELOVED BRETHREN, that you prize the Sabbath, and honour it, according to the gracious designs of God in instituting it, and the directions of his word. Sabbath profanation you may at once perceive is in its very nature a master sin—a sin, not merely malignant in itself, but subversive of all that is good, and introductory to all that is evil in the character and life.—Where it prevails, personal, family, and national religion alike are destroyed.—The annals of crime uniformly attest, that the habits of licentiousness, fraud, and violence, which have brought multitudes to die ignominiously in beggary, or in hospitals, or by the public executioner, were in many cases formed, and in all fostered, by the sin of Sabbath profanation. And a reference to the history of Christianity since the reformation will shew, that those churches which took up low views of the authority of the Sabbath, have been least efficient in holding forth the light of Divine truth; and have been, to the greatest extent, tainted with error and infidelity.

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We exhort you therefore, Brethren, as you would possess true religion, and present it in a vigorous type for the imitation of the generation now rising around you—to honour **THE LORD'S DAY**. Not only rest from business and journeyings on it, but study to enter into the rest of God. Give yourselves, with alacrity, to all the exercises which are designed, at once for the expression of the homage of the heart to our Father in heaven, and for the conveyance by Him to us of His Holy Spirit. Some of you, we believe, are under peculiar temptations to the violation of the Sabbath—who dwell in places where this holy day is but rarely marked out from other days by the sounding of the Gospel trumpet, and is regarded as a day for bodily relaxation, and pleasure. But consider, **BRETHREN**, that neither evil example, nor any other temptation however prevalent, or powerful, can be an excuse for our sin.—God requires one whole day in seven, as well as a portion of every day for his worship; and we must neither allow the example of ungodly men, nor wordly connexions and friendships to influence us to rob him, and rob ourselves of the Sabbath. Remember that exposition of the law of the Sabbath, which you have known from childhood, and can verify from Scripture, "The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful in other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy."

THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF THE YOUNG is an exercise peculiarly proper for the Sabbath, while it is in itself of such paramount importance, that it may properly be touched on in this address. Natural affection if rightly directed would lead parents to train up their children in the fear of God, and for his service. The law expressly prescribes this duty to parents; and, the very continuance, and enlargement of the Church of God in our world are dependent on its being observed. We do therefore exhort all heads of families into whose hands this letter comes, by their regard to the present and eternal welfare of their children—the authority of God—and the advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to be diligent in instructing the young in Divine Truth, and earnest and persevering in prayer for the Divine Life to be formed in them.

Let parents, as they have opportunity, send their children to Sabbath Schools, and Bible classes—they must yet know, that no pains, and no labours of Ministers and teachers can exempt them from the obligation to instruct their household in the things of God; and this obligation is to be discharged by a godly example in every day life, by daily counsels fetched from the oracles of God, and the more formal instructions of the Sabbath evening.

We would be far from unholy boasting concerning that branch of the church to which we belong, yet we may say, that she has been honourably distinguished among the Churches of the Reformation for maintaining the Divine authority of the Sabbath, and for pressing on all heads of families in her communion the duty of catechising their children and domestics on the evening of that day; and that to these causes mainly, under the Divine blessing, may be referred the hereditary character which the profession and practice of

godliness has to a certain extent had, in the land of our fathers, since the days of the Reformation.

In exhorting you to the practice of family catechising, we would remind you of the use which may be made of those FORMULARIES OF SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE, which the Church has adopted for exhibiting her faith to the world. These were drawn up by men who had been deeply taught in Divine Truth. They are plain, methodical, compendious, and, yet also, minute; and they appeal so constantly for the truth of their statements to the Bible that none who use them are in danger of being led away from it. Yet, after all, THE BIBLE is the very fountain of inspiration, and we would have you to draw daily from it for yourselves and for your children. It is in reference to the words of God as they were spoken by himself that the commandment runs: "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." We desire that your faith may be founded not on the opinions of men, but on the word of the living God. And the prevalence of gross error around us, some of which seeks its support from new Revelations, makes us jealous of saying any thing that might even seem to countenance the deceivers who are abroad, in their attempts to introduce an authority diverse from that of the Apostles and Prophets of our Lord.

We may say this at least, of the Formularies of our Church, that their Scriptural soundness has been witnessed to by the present Churches of the Reformation; and that, in no age, either before, or since that event, has the life and power of godliness been long maintained, when the doctrines which they contain have been abandoned.—And without arrogating any undue authority for them, we do also say, let none of you lightly give up their doctrines, for those which new teachers may bring to your ears.

We know that the zeal of false teachers now abroad, their pretensions in some cases to apostolical authority, as well as to piety and disinterestedness, are very specious; and are too often successful in turning the confidence of those to whom they address themselves. But need we remind you, Dear Brethren, that the Scripture teaches us to expect false teachers, especially in times like the present, of lukewarmness, division, and corruption. A zeal, fervid as was that of the ancient Pharisees, has often been put forth by the propagators of error gross as was theirs, shaming the coldness of the teachers of a purer faith. The clothing of the sheep has often concealed the ravening ferocity of the wolf. And now, as in other days, the horns of the Lamb may be seen, where the spirit of the Dragon prevails, and his voice may be heard.

Hold fast, then, the form of sound words in which you have been taught, and give way neither to heresies nor superstitions ancient or modern. Charity is to be exercised to all, even to deceivers and the deceived. But remember, that error itself, is no more an object of charity than is sin. It should ever be hated and shunned, and that in proportion to the dishonour which it does to the oracles of God and the Kingdom of his Son. Christians should contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints. And oh, that each of you would consider how much you can do, yea, and ought to do, for that FAITH, how humble soever may be your gifts and contracted your sphere.

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--By acting it out before the world, in a humble, gentle, benevolent, honest, and holy conversation, you will draw from men a homage both to the truth, and the excellency, of the religion of Jesus: and may happily also, in a day of merciful visitation, win some to embrace and obey it.

We may yet again briefly advert to the importance of the RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF THE YOUNG, in connexion with another great duty--THE PROMOTING THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF THE SAVIOUR. The children now on the breasts of their mothers, and around our tables, and the youths acquiring the rudiments of learning, and the arts and occupations of life, must very soon take the place and the stations in the Church and in the State, of the present generation of men and women. Of what infinite moment, then, is it, that our children should be imbued with the fear of God, and love to the Saviour--in a word, regenerated! And, on what instrumentality does this blessed result so much depend, as Parental instruction? We would have the fathers and mothers then, who hear or read these lines, deliberately to consider that it is with them, through the promised blessing of our Heavenly Father, on the right exercise of their influence and authority in their households, to give an increase of active and useful members to the Church of God.

If our population shall henceforth increase at a rate only the half of what it has done, since the territory was divided into two Provinces, then, ere the youths of our day shall have reached their threescore and ten years, the Upper Province alone will contain a population of seven millions of souls. How solemn the thought, that ere long, on a land that was but recently a wilderness, so large an addition is to be made to the Kingdom of God's Dear Son, or to the kingdom of the Prince of darkness! And, who that knows the natural tendency of men to profligacy of principle and practice, and observes the many influences of an evil kind that are now in vigorous operation in forming the character of this youthful community, and observes also--we say this with sorrow--how feebly Christian influence has yet been put forth by ourselves, or any other Church, to bring individuals under the reign of Christ, and mould the public mind to virtue--will not anticipate the future with the deepest solicitude? The regeneration of individuals and nations is indeed the direct result of the Divine Spirit; and yet, like any of the beneficial changes that take place in the natural world, it is in all cases brought about through the application of suitable means: and hence we do certainly infer, that unless there shall be found amongst us increased activity and zeal on the part of the Church of God, together with a more vigorous exercise of Christian influence, through the PRESS, EDUCATION, and LEGISLATION, then, there must inevitably ensue a rapid increase of spiritual ignorance and error, superstition and infidelity, with their sure accompaniments--licentiousness, fraud, violence, and anarchy. BELOVED BRETHREN, let all of us, Ministers, Elders and People, do our part; we may do much to avert these evils, and promote the reign of the Prince of Peace. Let us study to know "the love of God, which passeth all understanding," the "unspeakable gift of God," which is Christ the life of the world, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, who quickens and sanctifies all the elect of God, and then, shall we present our very selves "living sacrifices to God," and improve our many opportunities for the advancement of His cause in this land.

We specially commend to your countenance and support the Missionary undertakings of your several Presbyteries. Grieve not the occasional absence of your Ministers when they may be sent forth to minister the word and ordinances in destitute settlements; and give willingly of your substance for the support of Missionaries, according as the Lord has bestowed on yourselves temporal abundance, and spiritual privileges. The liberality of the Church at home, in sending forth Missionaries, and in contributing to the aid of our feeble congregations, should encourage you to make increased exertions and sacrifices for the same objects. It is confessedly "the day of small things with us": yet, we rejoice to announce to you, that a scheme for the education and training of pious youths for the Ministry, is now under our consideration, soon we trust to be submitted to you, for your concurrence and support.

But we must close this epistle, and though we are not without a suspicion that it is somewhat desultory, and may also be chargeable with omissions, we do yet call on you to receive it, in so far as it brings to you "the words of soberness and truth." And, BELOVED BRETHREN, we do earnestly pray that we may be approved of God, and accepted of you, as wise and faithful in the ministry of the word and ordinances with which we have been severally entrusted; for then, indeed, shall you and we be made to rejoice together in the great salvation, and promote the glory of God. And now, heartily commending you all unto His Grace, we bid you FAREWELL.

In name,

And by appointment of the Synod,
At Kingston,

Diet VI. Session VI. Year 1836.

WILLIAM RINTOUL, Moderator.

ERRATA.

- P. 1, l. 15—For communion read *connexion*.
 P. 2, l. 7—For attendings read *attendance*.
 Do. l. 25—For surrender read *surrendered*.
 Do. l. 37—For his oracles read *the oracles of God*.
 Do. l. 40—For purposes read *prepares*.
 P. 3, l. 8—For interests read *interest*.
 P. 4, l. 12—For lenity read *laxity*.
 P. 5, l. 24—For principles read *privileges*.
 P. 8, l. 22—For present read *purest*.
 Do. l. 30—For turning read *winning*.

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Moderator.